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ABSTRACT

The project described in this article examined the connection between students' overall development level as measured by the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI), and their participation in either part-time, on-campus employment or volunteer membership in the Stamp Union Program Council. A group of 141 students (from a total population of 226) were selected and given the SDTLI: a 135-item, true/false questionnaire that focuses on the changes individuals experience as a result of accomplishing a developmental task or having addressed important life events or issues within the context of higher education. Among the study's results were the following: (1) employees appeared to deal better with ambiguity and were better able to monitor and control their behavior than were volunteers; (2) employees tended to exhibit interpersonal qualities that fostered better peer relationships; (3) there appeared to be no difference between employees and volunteers in being able to clarify and have opportunities to define and explore their varied goals and plans, both personally and professionally; and (4) no significant differences were found for the impact of academic class on the developmental level of employees or volunteers. Differences found between white and non-white employees and volunteers are also discussed. (GLR)

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How different is the student punching the time clock from the one volunteering for the program board? Betsy A. Alperin examines the correlation between development and students' status as union volunteer or employee.

What's the difference?

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Student services practitioners proceed from numerous assumptions about college students. Among these are the assumptions that students develop during their tenure on campus, and that both the education and educational environment we provide influences that development. As college union and student activities practitioners, we are familiar with two distinct groups of students: part-time student employees and volunteer participants in the union's programming organization. Our daily interactions with these students proceed from numerous assumptions about their purpose as well as their social and personal development.

For example, we assume a "typical" part-time student employee works between or after classes to help defray educational expenses whereas a "typical" member of a programming organization volunteers unpaid service in the interests of planning and implementing programs and activities on campus. Also, we might assume that both types of students range widely in age, academic standing, prior life experiences, and level of skill development.

As Chickering (1981) noted, "The overarching educational purpose of our colleges and universities should be to encourage and enable intentional developmental change in students" (p. 2). The Stamp Student Union on the University of Maryland–College Park Campus subscribes to this philosophy and promotes intentional developmental change among its student participants, be they part-time employees or volunteers.

This study examined the connection between students' overall development level as measured by the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI) and their participation in either part-time, on-campus employment or volunteer membership in the Stamp Union Program Council.

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Methodology

Chickering's theory shaped the SDTLI (Winston & Miller, 1987). The SDTLI is a major revision of the Student Developmental Task Inventory, second edition (SDTI-2) (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979b), which in turn was a revision of the original Student Developmental Task Inventory (released in 1974). Designed for traditional-aged students (17–24) currently enrolled in higher education institutions, the SDTLI represents a sample of behaviors, feelings, and attitudes students may be expected to demonstrate when they have achieved certain developmental tasks common to young adult college students. The SDTLI focuses on the changes individuals experience as a result of accomplishing a developmental task or having addressed important life events or issues within the context of higher education. To do so, the SDTLI reports student development along three basic developmental tasks: establishing and clarifying purpose, developing mature interpersonal relationships, and developing academic autonomy.

The SDTLI consists of 135 true/false items that describe activities, attitudes, and feelings which may be generalized to larger developmental domains. Students respond to each statement (plus five additional items designed to identify response bias) by determining whether it is basically an accurate description (true) or an inaccurate description (false).

Several questions guided this research project:

1. Are part-time student employees of the Stamp Student Union developmentally different along Chickering's vectors as measured by the SDTLI from students who volunteer to serve on the Stamp Union Program Council (SUPC)?
2. Are student employees and volunteer members of the SUPC developmentally different according to academic class?
3. Are student employees and volunteer members of the SUPC developmentally different according to race?
4. Are student employees and volunteer members of the SUPC developmentally different according to gender?

Results

The survey population comprises all part-time student employees at the Stamp Student Union and all volunteer members of the SUPC who were enrolled at the University of Maryland–College Park for spring semester 1989 as full-time undergraduate students. Of 226 potential subjects, data was reported from 141, or 62.4 percent. Of this 141, 82 (58.2 percent) were part-time employees and 59 (41.8 percent) were volunteers. The mean age for the group was 19.872. Of the 66 male participants (46.8 percent) in the survey, 42 were part-time employees while 24 were volunteers. Of the 75 female participants (53.2 percent), 40 were part-time employees while 35 were volunteers.

Of the 110 white participants (78 percent) in the survey, 64 were part-time employees while 46 were volunteers. Of the 31 non-white participants (22 percent), 18 were part-time employees and 13 were volunteers. The survey population included 40 freshmen (28.4 percent), 44 sophomores (31.2 percent), 30 juniors (21.3 percent), and 27 seniors (19.1 percent).

To answer the research questions, a series of factorial ANOVAs were run to test for main effects and possible interactions. In looking at status (either part-time employee or volunteer) by gender for the whole sample, a significant main effect for status was detected on the Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships scale (MIR). As a group, employees scored significantly higher than did volunteers. Means and standard deviations show females across status scored higher than males on MIR.

An ANOVA performed for status by gender for Academic Autonomy (AA) also yielded a significant main effect for status. Again, as a group, employees scored significantly higher than did volunteers. While analysis revealed no main effects or interactions on the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task (PUR), means and standard deviations depicted volunteers as scoring higher than employees overall, and males scoring higher than females.

The analysis of race by status for the whole sample revealed statistically significant differences. Analysis detected main effects for race on both the PUR and AA Tasks: The white group scored significantly higher than the non-white group on both Tasks. Further, for the whole sample, an analysis of the MIR Task by race and status revealed a significant interaction effect. While white participants as a group posted similar scores whether their status was employee or volunteer, non-white employees had significantly higher scores than did non-white volunteers.

What is the SDTLI?

The Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory groups 135 statements into three sections. Students respond by labeling each statement that accurately describes them as *true* and each inaccurate description as *false*.

The following are sample questions from the SDTLI:

Education, career, and lifestyle

- **I have one or more effective techniques (not involving alcohol or drugs) that I use to help me relieve stress.**
- **I have identified and can list at least three ways I can be an asset to the community.**
- **Within the past three months, I have had a serious discussion with a faculty member concerning something of importance to me.**
- **An outside, objective observer could readily identify the ethical values that guide my daily life.**

Intimate relationships

- **It is difficult for me to see my partner socialize with others who could be rivals with me for my partner's affections.**
- **There is nothing about myself that is "too bad" to tell my partner.**
- **I have been unable to find a partner with whom I have maintained a satisfying intimate relationship for a period of more than three months.**
- **I am usually on guard about what I say and do around my partner in order to avoid upsetting or displeasing him/her.**

Relationships and academic environment

- **It is important that I be liked by everyone.**
- **I think most women tend to respond to situations emotionally, while men respond by thinking.**
- **I need to feel sure of the outcome before attempting something new or different.**
- **I deal with students who are different from me (for example, of another race or who speak a different language) by being polite and staying away from them as much as possible.**

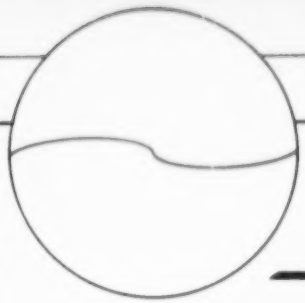
Interpretations of results

That differences were found between these two populations is worthy of note. According to this administration of the SDTLI, part-time employees scored significantly higher than did volunteers on the Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships Task (MIR). Specifically, within the MIR Task area, employees scored significantly higher in the subtask areas of Peer Relationships, Tolerance, and Emotional Autonomy. According to Winston and Miller's guidelines (1987, p. 9), these results suggest that employees, more so than volunteers, tend to have peer relationships characterized by trust, independence, frankness, and individuality. Such higher scores indicate respect for and acceptance of those of different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, races, lifestyles, and appearances. Further, such students do not need continual reassurance and approval from others. This is consistent with Chickering's (1969) suggestions that students mature through the process of recognizing and valuing interdependencies. Perhaps employees in this sample have had more opportunities than volunteers to accomplish tasks through cooperation and collaboration with others, thus promoting higher achievement on the MIR Task.

Women on the whole scored higher than men on the MIR Task. Perhaps women in the sample population have had more opportunities to develop in this area than their male counterparts.

Employees scored significantly higher than volunteers on the Academic Autonomy Task. According to Winston and Miller (1987), "Students who have accomplished this task have the capacity to deal well with ambiguity and to monitor and control their behavior in ways that allow them to attain personal goals and fulfill responsibilities" (p. 10). Perhaps student employees in the Stamp Student Union, to a greater extent than volunteers in the SUPC, are working in areas that allow them to explore academic interests or learn transferable skills which promote their academic achievement.

The study found no significant developmental differences between employees and volunteers on the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task. The PUR Task is further defined by five subtasks: Educational Involvement; Career Planning; Lifestyle Planning; Life Management; and Cultural Participation. Members of both status groups seemed to have opportunities to define and explore their educational plans and goals, to synthesize knowledge about themselves and the work world into career goals, to establish a personal direction in their lives and make plans for their future, to pursue cultural interests, and to structure and manage their daily lives successfully. Participation as either part-time employees or vol-



unteers may foster these achievements. As students who spend more time involved on campus, they may have developed a better sense of the purpose and meaning of higher education. The professional staff or graduate student advisers who supervise these students may have afforded them opportunities to clarify educational issues or career goals. Both employees and volunteers may be involved in union activities related directly to their career plans. For example, a student interested in a retail management career may supervise a retail department of the union and receive hands-on training and experience. Similarly, a student interested in a marketing career may volunteer on the SUPC's Publicity and Promotions Committee and receive training and experience in how to market and advertise a program or activity. These experiences allow students to develop skills which are transferable to the classroom and beyond to the world of work.

No significant results were found for the impact of academic class on the developmental level of employees or volunteers. This could be a result of the disproportionately large number of sophomores (31.2 percent) and small number of seniors (19.1 percent) in the study. It may also mean the students didn't experience any change in developmental level from one class to the next, or that the instrument didn't measure the change.

This study found white students as a group scored significantly higher than non-white students on both the PUR and AA Tasks. These findings must be interpreted cautiously. The evidence (see the section on limitations) that the normative group differs so significantly from the sample population, coupled with the evidence that the sample contains dependencies by class and status, may mean these findings can't be interpreted strictly according to the SDTLI guidelines.

In analyzing the impact of race on developmental achievement for the MIR Task, an inconsistent pattern emerges. White students across status (i.e., both employees and volunteers) scored similarly on this Task. Non-white volunteers, however, scored significantly lower on the MIR Task than did their non-white employee counterparts. This may reflect the small number of non-white volunteers in the sample (13) and the only slightly larger number of non-white employees (18).

This study found no developmental differences between the two status groups according to gender along the SDTLI Tasks. A possible reason for this may be that due to the many significant differences between the norm group and the sample group, the instrument may be measuring something other than what it purports to be measuring.

Limitations

Several limitations on these research findings should be noted. First, because of the timing of the study (end of the spring semester) and the length of the questionnaire, not all members of each status group (i.e., part-time student employees and volunteer members of SUPC) participated in the study.

Second, the population on which the SDTLI is based differed markedly from that of the sample population surveyed in this research project. According to Winston and Miller (1987, p. 12), the normative sample reflects data collected from undergraduates (age 17–24) enrolled at 20 different colleges in the United States and Canada. They explain: "By definition a characteristic of a developmental task (subtask) in the SDTLI is that more seniors than freshmen answered each item in the keyed direction. Consequently, norms are provided by academic class standing."

Of particular concern, then, are results of the Stamp Student Union study which indicate that freshman participants in this study differed significantly from those in the normative sample on the Developing Mature Relationships Task, and that each academic class, freshman through senior, differed significantly from those in the normative sample on the Intimacy Scale. This may be because this sample and the instrument's sample are composed of two different populations, or it may be that the instrument is not measuring the same thing for each sample. For example, Winston and Miller (1987, pp. 14–15) cite various ways the biographical-demographic region in which a student grew up may affect SDTLI scores. Again, results should be interpreted cautiously.

A third limitation is that this study did not investigate type of work for student employees (i.e., cashier, graphic artists, etc.) nor the type of involvement (i.e., committee member, officer, etc.) in the SUPC. Williams and Winston (1985, p. 58S) suggest developmental task achievement may be greater for students who

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University of Maryland's student employees scored higher than student volunteers on Developing Mature Relationships and Academic Autonomy tasks.

work in jobs related to their career goals.

A final limitation of this study is that while differences on some Tasks were found between the two groups, we cannot conclude that either employment or volunteer membership caused these differences. The differences may have pre-existed or even caused the individuals to choose a particular type of involvement.

Suggestions

The findings suggest that college union professionals working with these two groups, student employees and student volunteers, need to be sensitive to each group's strengths and weaknesses in devising and implementing programs and activities which will promote student development. Supervisors and advisers should pay particular attention to those areas in which their students demonstrate less developmental achievement, in hopes of providing extra challenge and support in those areas.

All practitioners have experiences with students that underscore recent research that a student's educational experience on campus encompasses more than what goes on in the classroom. Given recent findings by ACU-I's Task Force 2000 (1989, p. 19) that many current college union professionals began their careers as either undergraduate student employees or program board members, the supervision and training we offer these students is of paramount importance. It is in the best interest of the profession, as well as students, to make these out-of-class experiences as relevant to the students' expressed needs as possible.

Many undergraduates work part-time and/or volunteer in college union programming organizations, yet little research on these areas exists. This study set out to explore the collective developmental strengths and weaknesses of these students, so that those in the profession may respond more appropriately through training programs and activities. In addition to serving as an assessment instrument, this administration of the SDTLI functioned as a program evaluation tool to estimate the effect of the Stamp Student Union program on student participants' development. With these findings in mind, it is now up to us in the profession to develop and implement systematic programs and activities and to design future research projects that will promote student development in our college unions and activities programs.

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